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A radio talk by Mr. W. W. Vincent, chief, western district, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Agriculture delivered through Station KPO San Francisco and associated National Broadcasting stations, Thursday, November 27, 1930.

Folks, I feel pretty good today. I have received so many nice letters on these talks of mine that I want to thank you. Today, I have one from a lady who took up label-reading immediately after my second talk. She says she has been a housewife for 10 years and has learned more in the last few months regarding the foods and drugs she purchased than she has ever been able to learn before. She signs herself a "Profound Label Reader."

I don't want to appear boastful, but it is my firm conviction that four of my talks alone contain information that can save American consumers millions of dollars annually. Those four talks are the ones on health foods, fat reducers, sea foods, and my first talk on fish.

May I again emphasize the fact that my motive in giving these talks is to be of construction service to you consumers. I have no quarrel with any manufacturer. I desire simply that they deliver what you pay for, and that you get what you pay for. That means goods truthfully labeled and of satisfactory quality. The vast majority of ethical food and drug manufacturers produce goods of satisfactory quality, truthfully labeled. In the food and Drug Administration it is our mission to protect makers and buyers of such goods from the unfair competition of low quality, falsely-labeled goods.

I have been particularly gratified that instructors or heads of departments connected with several of our Western State universities are taking up the label reading idea. They have written to me for "read-the-label" material for the members of their classes. Health authorities as far away as Florida have written.

You know we live in a fast age. It requires rapid work on the part of your food and drug authorities to keep acquainted with new developments in food and drug lines. New industries arise, and quickly exceed in magnitude of achievement what, 30 years ago, would have been impossible within a score of years. I'll venture hundreds of you listening to me today don't know that the canning of mackerel in California is an industry of magnitude, a complete development of but about four years. Think of it! In 1926, just 550 cases were packed. The year 1929 saw the total reach 583,847 cases. Each case contained 48 one-pound cans. A total of 28,024,656 cans of mackerel packed by an industry that five years before was unthought of. There are some interesting things in connection with the development of that business. I think I'd better tell you about them.

Abuses developed in labeling the product. They should interest you. Competitive fish packers became greatly interested. Your Food and Drug Administration was interested and your Federal Trade Commission became involved.

Remember, now, 1926 saw the industry starting in California--- 550 cases of mackerel packed. In 1927, 10,725 cases were packed. Those were

experimental years. Packing processes were being studied; style of containers determined; world markets supplied with samples; orders being booked. The business was gathering momentum. 1928 saw mackerel-packing a real business. The fish were going into one-pound oval cans and the No. 1 tall cans, such as are used for salmon.

Your food and drug agents were aware of what was going on. Late 1927 found them searching for certain interstate shipments of some of this material--- not because bad fish had been packed, but because certain individuals had conceived a great idea. They were labeling the tall cans in a peculiar manner, a manner that would fool people in foreign countries, to whom they intended to ship this fish. Most labels were red in color. Many bore a picture of a King Salmon and somewhere on practically all labels appeared prominently the word "Salmon." Late in 1926, your food and drug agents had taken exception to the first of these labels later to appear on mackerel. They had refused to permit free entry without first requiring label changes of an importation from Mexico of a sample shipment of fish labeled "Amando Brand Selected Salmo." On that label was portrayed the picture of a salmon. But the fish in the can was Yellowtail, another species of fish entirely, packed on the west coast of Mexico. Shipments of this same material had already been made to distant countries and had given rise to complaints. Dealers in salmon, both in Singapore and the Straits Settlements, were excited. People were buying the material, believing it was salmon. The label fooled them. Because of these complaints, and of our detention of importations, a label change was made. They retained the word "Salmo"--- also the picture of the salmon. The new label no longer read, "Amando Brand Selected Salmo," but rather, "Salmo Brand Selected Specially Prepared Mackerel." This label, I believe, was the first to be applied to mackerel being packed in California. Evidently mackerel so labeled went over with great success.

Remember, no consuming markets had yet been developed. Thousands of cases were in prospect of packing. One packer was evidently enjoying success in the merchandising of the product when the label bore a picture of a salmon, together with the word "Salmo" thereon. The other packers would follow suit. They too, would trade on the years of advertising behind the merchandising of canned salmon in foreign countries. Numerous labels were devised, intended to fool the careless purchaser, or foreign buyers who could not read the label. We had a "Chum" Brand California Mackerel." "Chum" is the name of a species of salmon. That label bore the picture of a salmon and the words, "Salmon Style," were printed on the belly of the fish depicted upon the label. Various brands labeled, "Mackerel," carried pictures of salmon, together with the words "Packed Salmon Style," or "Salmon Style Mackerel." We had "King Solomon Brand Selected Mackerel" with a picture of the salmon. We had a "Spelmon Brand Mackerel," and we had "Salomar Brand Mackerel" further labeled as "Extra Quality Packed Salmon Style exclusively under the Salomar Brand," the latter appearing beneath the salmon picture. We had "Prime Catch Fresh Mackerel Packed Salmon Style." Pardon me for quoting so many label statements, but, folks, I want to show you big selling on the reputation of another product. By 1928, this material had developed a chaotic condition in our foreign fish markets. The salmon industry was appealing to the Federal Trade Commission on the grounds of unfair trade practice. Your Food and Drug Administration could see no justification for the exploitation of a mackerel under labels aimed to simulate salmon and, accordingly, notified packers that failure immediately to correct many of the labels would result in instant action under the Food and Drugs Act.



Don't think I exaggerate the merchandising possibilities of mackerel labeled as I have described. I have a letter in my files from an Athens, Greece, dealer, a distributor of salmon, who wrote a salmon packer as follows:

"We enclose herewith a label of a known brand, ("Salmon Style California Mackerel"), and in case you are in a position to offer the same line under a similar label with the word "Salmon" appearing in larger and more visible letter than those showing on the enclosed one, we can assure you of very interesting transactions." He asked for firm quotations on mackerel, labeled as described, in blocks of one thousand cases at various Greek ports.

My friends, there are some packers who would be glad to sell their remaining stock of dishonest mackerel labels at a bargain. They are worthless to them for your food and drug agents will not permit their use. This is one way your Food and Drugs Act protects you and likewise protects our foreign consumers of American packed products. That act--- in addition to regulating interstate traffic--- prevents the exportation of adulterated or misbranded products to any foreign country. Undoubtedly, you are now beginning to realize what I meant when I previously said that the Food and Drug Administration wields a greater influence on the economic life of our food and drug industries than does any other governmental agency.

Now, for my "read the label" information. Let's start with sardines and herring. First, a herring is not a sardine, nor is a true sardine a herring. But, commercially speaking, any small canned fish of the herring family is a sardine. I will tell you why. The dictionary definition for "Sardine" recognizes as such, any of the small Clupeoid fishes, and a Clupeoid fish is one belonging to the herring family. The herring family not only includes the true sardine, or Pilchard, but also the Shad, Sprat, and Brisling. Lots of these fish are consumed. How many cases of sardines do you imagine were packed in California last year? Nearly 3,900,000 cases. And Maine and Massachusetts contributed about 2,000,000 cases. Large quantities are also imported.

In British Columbia, they pack the true sardines and label them "Pilchards." In California, this same Pilchard is labeled "Sardine," while in Maine a young herring takes the name "Maine Sardine." It is a Pilchard again that takes the name "Sardine" in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, while up in the North Sea countries we find men canning sprats and labeling them as "Brisling" or "Sprats" or "Sardines."

My friends, one of the very early cases instituted under the Federal food and drugs act involved the seizure of California Sardines which were labeled in part as "California Broiled Mackerel." Since then, many importations of fish have been detained at time of entry and required to be properly relabeled.

When you buy sardines, read the label. Sardines are available to you in various size packages as necessitated by size of fish and packing process employed. The British Columbia Sardine--- usually labeled "Pilchard"--- as well as some packed in California, reach you in the tall salmon-style can. These consist of rather large fish, placed in the can raw, with nothing but salt added, after which they are cooked within the sealed can. The packing of sardines in large oval cans is largely restricted to California. You will

find them labeled as "Packed in Tomato Sauce," "Packed in Mustard Sauce," or "Packed in Wine Sauce." Also, there are small flat cans, of approximately four ounce contents, in which much smaller fish are used. You generally find these packed in olive oil. You generally find the Maine sardine of commerce, (a herring), packed in cottonseed oil or mustard sauce.

"Brisling" is the Norwegian term applied to the particular species of sardine canned up there. "Sprat" is the English term for the same fish. The finest of these imported from Scandinavian countries are packed in olive oil. Their labels will read "Norwegian Sardines," or "Norwegian Brisling," or "Brisling Sardines." Norwegian packers put up a cheaper grade called "Moussa" sardines, when the sea herring similar to our Maine sardines are utilized. You may occasionally encounter packs of sardines from Finland and Russia labeled as "Sprats". Sometimes, instead of olive oil, a blend of other vegetable oils is used and the label will read "packed in salad oil." Sprats and Brisling sardines are smoked in the course of preparations. When American sardines are smoked, they are usually so labeled.

"Salacchini" is a salted, dry and pressed sardine which comes to you in small wooden tubs. You sometimes see them in the grocery store with the fish laid out like spokes in a wheel. This product is consumed largely by people of Italian lineage, but large quantities have been packed in California for shipment to the Orient.

"Sardines in Salt," from Italy, are imported generally in round cans of various sizes. This product is made by dry-salting the fish in large tubs. This draws considerable of their moisture, after which they are placed in cans, more salt added, then sealed. The net-weight declaration appearing on the can is the weight of the fish exclusive of such brine and salt as may be found within the can. You wouldn't want to buy that salt at a sardine price.

You are probably familiar with "Anchovies in Salt," a product prepared from anchovies, in identically the same manner as sardines. The "fillets" which frequently garnish your salads are the sides of the anchovies which, after curing, have been skinned and freed from the backbone and most of the small rib bones. They reach you both in cans and small bottles, and usually in olive oil. Frequently they are rolled and some contain a caper, which is a flower bud.

You find anchovy paste and sardine paste in the finer grocery stores in small packages or tubes. This is the paste made from ground salted anchovies or sardines. Epicures know these products, but here's something they don't know. Your Food and Drug Administration has detained many importations of "Anchovy Fillets" or "Anchovies" because "Needle Fish," a cheaper and inferior product, had been packed and labeled "Anchovies." They have detained anchovy and sardine pastes because they were artificially colored, either with iron oxide or prohibited coal-tar dyes. The reason for artificial color was to give a rich reddish brown appearance. You get that naturally if the fish has been handled properly in its preparation.

You may encounter an imported product labeled "Anchovy Sprats." My friends, those are not anchovies. They are Sprats. The Department allows them to be labeled in that manner, because for years they have been sold as

anchovies in Scandinavian countries and the name in part characterizes the style of pack. They are unsterilized, pickled fish, usually handled under refrigeration. They reach you in cans, miniature barrels, or other unusual packages.

Should the labels on any of these fish above mentioned read "Packed in Oil," you may assume that cottonseed, peanut, or other suitable vegetable oil has been employed. They will specify olive oil if such is used, because that is considered as denoting a superior product.

Folks, my time is up. I will have to tell you more about herring, mackerel, fish balls, finnan haddie, and bloaters next week. If you want to buy fish and other food products with discrimination, drop a post card to W. W. Vincent, care of this station, or U. S. Food and Drug Laboratory, San Francisco. It is free for the asking and should help make you an intelligent buyer.

